

Testimony of  
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Before the  
Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

Changing the Kindergarten start age to September 1st would make a world of difference for those children not only during their year in kindergarten, but also during the rest of their years in school. During the start of any given school year, my kindergarten students' ages range from 4 1/2 to almost 6. The difference in social development alone is massive. This difference is intensified if the children have not attended preschool (which is the case more than 50% of the time). A 4 year old child does not have the same emotional intelligence as a 5 1/2 year old child. The mental/emotional capacity is just not there. Academically, it's not realistic to expect the same performance and achievement from a 4 1/2 year old and a 5 1/2 year old. Children in kindergarten today do not only have to know their ABC's and 123's, but they need to be able to read a Level D text, add and subtract numbers to 10, and write a 2-3 sentence story ( just to name a few). I have seen so many students struggle because their brains are just not ready to be able to competently and consistently do these things that we expect of them. It's hard for the younger students to "keep up" with some of the older students in doing these tasks. At the end of the school year, we are sending students performing at vastly different levels to first grade. Those students will again struggle with those same issues again in first grade. Some students do eventually catch up to grade level expectations, but more often they do not and will continue to struggle. If we can save these kiddos from struggling just by changing the kindergarten start age, why would we not? It's heart wrenching to see students not understand how to decode a simple CVC word when the rest of their peers are reading entire books. Those students notice that they are not doing the same thing as their friends and they cannot

understand why they can't do it. By changing the kindergarten start age to September 1, we would be giving those younger students an advantage that we have not been able to offer before, more time for their brains to develop. Our job is to help set our students up for success and I feel that we are not doing that for those younger students. I have seen many children who turn 5 in November and December struggle with our kindergarten curriculum and expectations. Some of those students will move on to first grade with the rest of their class and will most likely continue to struggle in first grade and beyond. However, we find that the students that are retained and repeat kindergarten the next year perform so much better because their brains are then ready to experience and get the most out of our curriculum and expectations. Please consider giving our "younger" kindergarten students the advantage of more time. More time for their brains to develop. More time for their social skills to develop. More time to grow before the rigorous demands of kindergarten begin.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

